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Epilogue

“Portugal and England in Africa” (1891) by Guilherme de Vasconcelos Abreu

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On the occasion of the 130 years after the British Ultimatum (1890), it is pertinent and timely to conclude this volume by turning our attention to Guilherme de Vasconcelos Abreu’s commentary on what would become one of the traumas of the Portuguese empire (e.g. Lourenço [1978] 2001; Alexandre 2006). While reinforcing the British presence in Africa, the Ultimatum, an outcome of the European authoritarian and self-interested partition of Africa ensuing from the Berlin Conference (1884–5), decried Portugal’s power in that continent and determined not only a change in Portugal’s relationship with its then colonies, both African and Asian, but also a turning point in its self-perception and the self-fashioning of its national image. Let us not forget that the colonial experience and styles were built on a comparative axis and struggle for hegemony. The so-called

Scramble for Africa primarily made Portugal realize its own subalternity and military, political and economic abasement in the face of stronger European nations (e.g. Santos 2009: 13).¹

Although this event is in general “badly known by British imperial historiography” (Coelho 2006: 1), it has been widely discussed in Portuguese scholarship. On the one hand, the Ultimatum hindered the Portuguese design of linking Angola to Mozambique – that is, the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean, Mozambique being the crossing point to Asia – through the occupation of the in-between territories, which would have resulted in a broad coast-to-coast strip of land under Portuguese control that would have stopped the British from amassing more influence.² On the other hand, while denying Portugal’s claim to its historical rights of precedence in African land – i.e., “priority of discovery or of occupation”, as Vasconcelos Abreu puts it – the Ultimatum forced Portugal into the effective occupation of its territories in sub-Saharan Africa, this being an imposed requirement for the preservation of those territories inspired by the British colonial model in India (Hespanha 1999: 17). Posited in terms of a defensive imperialism (Catroga 1999: 211), the occupation³ translated into a more direct model of rule and corporate institutionalization of the Luso colonial machine in Africa, which would remain the centre of the Portuguese colonial project until its decolonization in 1975.

In 1891, Guilherme de Vasconcelos Abreu (1842–1907),⁴ professor of Sanskrit at the Lisbon *Curso Superior de Letras*,⁵ published an article entitled “Portugal and England in Africa” in *The Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review*, the journal of the British Oriental Institute in Woking,

¹ On these power–knowledge relations, see Everton V. Machado’s chapter in this volume, particularly the section “Hoping for their salvation through the general currents of civilisation”.

² As Teresa Pinto Coelho succinctly puts it, the ultimatum “refers to a *memorandum* sent to the Portuguese Government [...] demand[ing] the withdrawal of the Portuguese troops from Mashona and Matabeleland (later Rhodesia) and the Shire–Nyasa region (Malawi) where Portuguese and British interests in Africa overlapped. [...] [T]he Ultimatum meant the official acknowledgement of British sovereignty over territories Portugal had been claiming for centuries” (2006: 1).

³ According to Alexandre (2006: 34), this process gained a new impulse with the Portuguese victory in 1895 over Gungunhana, last emperor of the Gaza Empire, and would only be completed by the end of the First World War.

⁴ For a full bio-bibliography of Guilherme de Vasconcelos Abreu, see (in Portuguese) <http://tecop.letras.ulisboa.pt/np4/file/465/GVA.pdf>.

⁵ This was the name of the higher education institution founded in 1861 that became in 1911 the Faculty of Letters, now the School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon.

Surrey. This article, with which most readers are unfamiliar, was published in two parts, the first being printed under the authorship of “a Portuguese official”, that is, anonymously. This is the only text by Vasconcelos Abreu known to have been presumably written directly in English and on the matter of the Ultimatum, and it is transcribed in its entirety below.

When he wrote the article, the Sanskritist was the president of the Asiatic Commission of the Lisbon Geographic Society, the same institution that headed some of the protests against the Anglo-Portuguese conflict. In response to a protest dated 14 January 1890, the Society received numerous letters of support expressing solidarity with Portugal, clearly perceived as a victim of England, some suggesting that commercial relations with that country should be broken off. The letters came not only from national bodies and Portuguese embassies, consulates and legations, but also from international scientific partner institutions, such as the Société académique indo-chinoise de France, the Sociedad Geográfica de Madrid, the Smithsonian Institute and the Società Africana di Italia, among others.⁶ Meanwhile, the streets of Portugal’s capital and of other main cities became the stage of anti-British public demonstrations, to use Vasconcelos Abreu’s words, a “patriotic movement [...] breath[ing] the soul of all”, that plunged the country into political instability and a succession of governments. According to historian Valentim Alexandre (2006: 33), these nationalist agitations were taken to a higher level with the signature on 20 August 1890 of the Treaty of London setting the territorial borders of Angola and Mozambique, a treaty which was not, however, ratified. It took less than a year for the approval on 11 June 1891 of a new but quite similar agreement, the Anglo-Portuguese African Treaty.⁷ This document was signed after Vasconcelos Abreu published his article, which notwithstanding anticipates the inevitable outcome for an impotent country accused of having neglected “splendid colonial opportunities” (*The Guardian*, 19 February 1890, qtd. in Coelho 2006: 5) and subjugated to the sovereignty of more

⁶ See the Luciano Cordeiro collection held at the Ethnographic and Historical Museum of the Lisbon Geographic Society: *Correspondência 1890* [Correspondence 1890], box 1.

⁷ See the Hansard text of the presentation of this treaty online at <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1891/jun/11/anglo-portuguese-african-treaty>.

powerful nations and interests: Vasconcelos Abreu admits that “Portuguese anger is short lived. True, we have not enough vindictiveness to be cruel [...]”

The Sanskritist’s testimony converges with the wider public display of a national feeling of outrage and the sense that Portugal has been betrayed and plundered by a centuries-old ally. Nonetheless, under the anonymous label of “a Portuguese official” he asserts that “I shall endeavour to consider the facts from the standpoint of a critic whose object is to elicit the truth, and not as a Portuguese patriot, whose judgment may be clouded by indignation at what his country has suffered from an ancient ally”. This statement of intent, presenting himself as a credible and reliable narrator and unbiased observer of the geopolitics of western colonial expansionism in Africa, can hardly be taken for granted.

Just before authoring this testimony, Vasconcelos Abreu had published in 1889–90 a project for the creation of an Oriental and Overseas Institute that would concentrate colonial scientific education in Portugal. Modelled on the colonial schools existing in England, France, Holland and Germany, this institute would respond to the practical need to educate and train specialists – i.e. colonial agents – to go on to develop more effective direct administration policies in the spaces under the state’s control.⁸ Growing into an intellectual agent of empire, Vasconcelos Abreu had voiced the same utilitarian and politicized view of knowledge/science as early as in the 1870s, namely in his first report on his period of study abroad. Supported by a grant from the Portuguese government, between 1875 and 1877 he carried out studies in Oriental philology, Sanskrit and Vedic literature in particular, at the *École pratique des hautes études* in Paris and at the University of Munich. Indeed, he is not known to have ever visited India, his knowledge having been acquired and cemented at second hand within European borders. Oriental studies, so he writes in the report, would be a means to obtain “knowledge about the social and moral state of the indigenous peoples

⁸ On this project, see Patrícia Ferraz de Matos’s chapter in this volume.

of the colonies”⁹ (Vasconcelos Abreu 1878: 5, n. 2). These studies, put to the use of western scholars, would be part of the wider science of colonial administration as well as colonial expansion that the Sanskritist, in his article of 1891 (see below), asserts to be conducted on the collective behalf of “the best interests of humanity”. With the British Ultimatum, those interests could no longer be fulfilled. This entailed Portugal’s symbolic exclusion from the European imperial project and from the possibility, perhaps more than the power, to civilize and colonialize as expected from a modern western nation. On the flip side, the British Ultimatum reinforced the grounds for the institutionalization of scientific colonialism, a purpose that the Escola Colonial [Colonial School] would fill in under the aegis of the Lisbon Geographic Society when it was established in 1906.

At a time when national concerns and politics were focused on Africa and the maintenance of Portugal’s presence in this territory, Vasconcelos Abreu’s intellectual mission was focused on the advancement of knowledge about classical India, which would be a means to resuscitate the pedigree of a lost civilization with which Portuguese sailors had come into contact in the fifteenth century. This Romantic search for indigenous origins as a means of accessing a lost civilization and conversely better understanding its present state indirectly legitimated Portugal’s place and role in the making of the Orient as a western object of observation and study dating back to the early-modern missionary activity. Notwithstanding, it was Africa that was being shaped in the modern Portuguese imaginary, so the orientalist argues, as the third empire yet to come and fulfil: “Then Africa would be the third Empire which the Portuguese have created, India and Brazil being the first and second. To lose the third Empire would be our national death and the failure of our historical task in the annals of the world.” On the one hand, India – synecdochally representing the East – is singled out as the firstborn of the Portuguese imperial experience.¹⁰ On the other, the triad

⁹ Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine. The original: “[O] conhecimento do estado social e moral dos indigenas das colonias.”

¹⁰ Indeed, this imperial/colonial experience began in the East with India and ended in the East with the transfer of sovereignty of Macau from Portugal to the People’s Republic of China in 1999.

of empires geographically distributed across the globe resonates with the Portuguese overseas entrepreneurship and global diaspora that cannot be divorced from an ecumenical project of empire and the claim to a predestined role to be played in world history. The third empire would be a kind of ethical commitment to the country's national history and a tribute to its collective historical memory.

The announced shift of interest towards Africa, which the British were also undergoing, for according to Vasconcelos Abreu, their Indian colony was no longer profitable, would symbolize the attempt to regain the political, material, symbolic and historical power that the East was no longer providing. Vasconcelos Abreu sets the Napoleonic wars as the origin of the rise of England's colonial power, coincidentally the moment when Edward Said, in his *Orientalism* (1978), situates the emergence of modern orientalism, and Napoleon's invasion of the Iberian Peninsula as the beginning of the decline of the Portuguese empire, Brazil – the American empire – having been its first loss. While, to the orientalist Vasconcelos Abreu, the nation could not afford the loss of the much-desired third empire, for it would mark the failure of an historical mission shaped since the time of the 'Portuguese discoveries' (Alexandre 2006: 34), hence the failure of its mission as a modern nation, nothing is said about the first Empire. India, which seven years later would be celebrated on the occasion of the fourth centenary of Vasco da Gama's discovery of the maritime route to the Indian subcontinent (1898), appears to linger somewhere between the memory of a glorious national past (at one time commercial, political and religious) and a future that never came. Vasconcelos Abreu's silence on India can be taken to encapsulate 'Portuguese India' as an exhausted space confined to the position of a crystallized symbol or vestige of that past. It would roughly embody, in the words of Duarte Braga, "the symbolic power that India held in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in order to establish itself from *illo tempore* as a symbolic referent of the image of predestination of Portugal as an empire" (2019: 65).¹¹ Little wonder that

¹¹ The original: "[O] poder simbólico que a Índia deteve, nos séculos XIX e XX, para se instituir como referente simbólico da imagem da predestinação, desde *illo tempore*, de Portugal enquanto império."

the national epic *The Lusiads* (1572), as the historian António Hespanha rightly recalled (1999: 15), narrates the Portuguese mythical journey to India.

No less significant, Vasconcelos Abreu's silence about the state of the Portuguese empire of India cannot go unnoticed given that the Portuguese government of its Indian territories (Goa, Daman, Diu, and Nagar-Haveli) was already cause for the negative perception of Portugal's colonial model and thus an object of criticism by the British, to whom India was the uncontested centre of their empire. The Ultimatum appears, therefore, to extend that criticism to the context of Africa in a different guise. As shown by Filipa Lowndes Vicente (2015), British modern historiography about India often posited that imperial model as unstructured, weak and poor, decaying and obsolete, repressive and religiously intolerant (Portuguese Catholicism against British Protestantism) – that is, British historiography veered towards the orientalizing of the Portuguese colonizer (Vicente 2015: 292). Africa, which the orientalist says serves as an extension, or replication, of an “humiliation” experienced both in Europe and Asia, would become the next stage for the competition of two rivals with unmatched force and spheres of influence (Vicente 2015: 291–2). Africa standing for the potential revival of the Portuguese historic mission implied relegating the Portuguese interests in the East to second-order priority status; safeguarding Africa came first.

Vasconcelos Abreu's “Portugal and England in Africa” is imbued with a patriotic, emotive and at times ironic tone against the outrage inflicted by England, whose foreign policy in Africa is shown to be inconsistent and whose presence in the black continent is significantly couched in terms of a debt to Portugal. A debt that instead of being repaid was, to the Portuguese mind, betrayed. To the orientalist, England, “a strong nation”, would be seeking profit by force, whilst Portugal, “the little nation”, would be preserving its African patrimony by virtue of its much-contested historical rights. Vasconcelos Abreu does not, however, refrain from criticizing Portuguese diplomacy for relying too much in its presential and epistemological precedence in

Africa. Particularly since the Berlin Conference through the beginning of the twentieth century, Portuguese discourses not only on Africa but also on the East would invariably emphasize Portugal's pioneering role in the opening of the West to the knowledge – especially geographic, commercial, religious, and linguistic – of those territories, which had sown the seed for the modern colonial experience and science. That role, so it seems to Vasconcelos Abreu, makes the English plotting against its ally unjustifiable, greedy, and unfair. This betrayal would be the ultimate hurdle thrown in Portugal's path to fulfil its "historical task" – this is to say, its mission to build a global empire.

In 1878, Vasconcelos Abreu had asserted that "India is a country unlike the majority of Africa, a country of savages without traditions of a great civilization" (1878: 11);¹² historian Fernando Catroga (1999: 228) finds in this statement opposing the first and the third empires the legitimization for colonial intervention and expansion in Africa, that is, the launching of a project of national and imperial regeneration. The regenerative wave of 1890 had, as Alexandre highlights, "a strong impact on the country's political and ideological life, which left profound traces in its collective memory as it was built and transmitted by the generation that lived through it" (2006: 33)¹³ – indeed, the generation of Guilherme de Vasconcelos Abreu himself.

As follows, Vasconcelos Abreu's article is reproduced as it was published, even if some passages may sound slightly strange, following the structures of the Portuguese language. Editorial intervention was restricted to the correction of obvious typographical errors as well as to the occasional modification of prepositions and verb tenses. Whenever necessary, toponyms were adapted to the English language for ease of understanding, in which case a note is provided upon

¹² The original: "A Índia não é um país como a maior parte da África, país de selvagens sem tradições de uma grande civilização."

¹³ The original: "[U]m forte impacto na vida política e ideológica do país, deixando traços profundos na sua memória colectiva, tal como foi construída e transmitida pela geração que a viveu."

their first occurrence with the orthography used in the original. Portuguese names adapted into English by the author were replaced with their original form and are properly marked through a footnote. Intervention regarding punctuation was minimal. On the one hand, unnecessary and distracting punctuation was deleted, namely commas preceding dashes; on the other, when necessary, commas were added after discursive connectors in order to facilitate reading. Upper case letters and dates were left unchanged.

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Portugal and England in Africa*

by Guilherme de Vasconcelos Abreu

[Part I]

Historical antecedents – The conflict – The Treaty of the 20th August, 1890 –

The *Modus Vivendi*

Introduction

Audi alteram partem! In what I intend to write regarding the Treaty of the 20th August, 1890, concluded in London and signed by the Prime Minister of Great Britain¹ and the Minister Plenipotentiary of Portugal,² I shall endeavour to consider the facts from the standpoint of a critic whose object is to elicit the truth, and not as a Portuguese patriot, whose judgment may be clouded by indignation at³ what his country has suffered from an ancient ally, who professes to be ever willing to “hear the other side,” to love “fair play,” and to be guided by the highest motives of humanity.

The *Ultimatum* of the 11th January, 1890, must be judged by the facts which preceded it. Then, the *modus vivendi* – the diplomatic synthesis of the Treaty – will remain the historical commentary of the worth of diplomacy and of International Law, that illusory right which has no tribunal to maintain it.⁴

* 1891. “Portugal and England in Africa. By a Portuguese Official.” *The Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review* I (1, Jan.): 104–10. Available at <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.289204/page/n107>; 1891. “Portugal and England in Africa. Part II.” *The Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review* I (2, Apr.): 319–22. Available at <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.289204/page/n323>.

¹ Lord Salisbury. (*N. E.*)

² Augusto César Barjona de Freitas (1834–1900), Portuguese politician representative of the Regeneration party. In 1890, he was stationed in London as minister plenipotentiary. (*N. E.*)

³ *of* in the original. (*N. E.*)

⁴ It was negotiated through the Portuguese Minister in London, Luís de Soveral (1851–1922), and signed on 14 November 1890. (*N. E.*)

The question between Portugal and England is of long date. It was born in old times, when these two European nations were the only ones in the Continent, then altogether mysterious, to which the Portuguese were the first to bring the beacon of their vessels and of Christian civilization. In African Odysseys, the Portuguese were first; but in this century the English took the lead in the exploration of the interior of savage Africa. But the English always followed across the paths of the Portuguese; they always found the unperishing prints of our ancient vanguards so courageously pushed into the heart of Africa.

We came first; the English have first derived profit from it, and the two nations have never understood that their wisest course was to harmonize their interests by dividing African perils, glory, and conquests between them. Indeed, their interests have become hostile, much to their respective disadvantage, as will be shown further on. The incontestable rights of Portugal are like those of a good old, but decaying, family; those of England are modern, almost always obtained by ruse, based on wealth and defended by force. Like old noblemen, *we* have been frankness itself, but... let us say nothing; among nations frankness is nonsense; might is right.

England has got hold of ancient Portuguese territory on the African coast, also on that of Senegambia, Sierra Leone, and of the coast of Mina. Occupying a magnificent position in the Cape which the Dutch could not keep, the English have established themselves on the Natal coast; and seeing, for some years, that their Indian Empire was threatened on the one side by Russia, and that its profits were likely to be seriously diminished on the other by satisfying the new national aspirations of the anglicized Hindus, they now think of creating an Empire in Africa – as a compensation for losses in India, which is getting out of hand – at the expense of Portuguese misfortunes and frankness as of yore in India.

The struggle of the rivals was enormously unequal. Portugal had its epic tradition; but England – more and more prosperous after the wars with Napoleon, vanquished in this very part of the Peninsula where the great conqueror of modern times received the first blow, in this very Portugal

where the English made ramparts and trenches of the Portuguese soldiers – became the first power of the seas. Her expansibility and wealth gave her enough boldness to dare, her ships enough force to succeed in her adventures, and in masking her greed with the name of protection, she easily changed protection into possession.

The wars at the beginning of this century, which rendered England prosperous, made us poor and weak. The French invasion caused our loss of whatever strength we had in gold, vessels, and men. Brazil benefited from⁵ this. We had first to endure the monstrous protectorate of England, from which we have heroically freed ourselves. Civil wars then broke⁶ out, one after another, till the end of the first half of this century; we are a nation that has remade itself during the last thirty to forty years at the outside.

It was, therefore, easy for England to continue her progress in Africa. I do not obviously care to speak of the thousand cases of unconscious Portuguese cooperation, and of the occasional submission of some Portuguese Government. What England could not snatch from the comparative material weakness of her ally, she obtained from a benevolence and an obligingness which, after all, is only humiliation! It would be easy to cite instances of such conduct of England towards us in Europe, Asia, and Africa.

The greed of the strong has often the blinding impatience of the glutton. This singular greed blinds England and induces her, a strong nation, to prefer spoliation by other nations to easily sharing with an ally. Indeed, she has had this curious feeling against the very nation of which she has profited most. She opposed a possible Portuguese occupation of a part of the Congo, and preferred to it spoliation to her own detriment. In this matter, she roused the cupidity of Europe, and lost her almost absolute supremacy in Africa.

Berlin has taken the upper hand over London in the affair of the Congo. The howling of the wolves made known a prey which they disputed to one another.

⁵ *by* in the original. (*N. E.*)

⁶ *break* in the original. (*N. E.*)

Homo homini lupus! The eagles have scented the air, surveyed the space, and are swooping down, one to take her part of the prey, the other to defend her young. France and Germany are stopping the way to England in Africa, where she hoped to march on alone.

Exitus ergo quis est?

In six years, Germany has become an African power. The Berlin Conference has created the Colonial appetite of the Germans. They successfully occupy the south-east coast of Cameroun⁷ and the Angra-Pequena⁸ bay. They found an Empire to the south of the Portuguese province Mossamedes, at Damara and in the Great Namaqua; they arrived⁹ at Zanzibar, where England had long exercised a *de facto* protectorate.

It was then that England, blinded by the singular greed of which I have spoken, recognized that she had to cede a part of her pretensions. She could certainly override with ease the rights of the Portuguese; but it was wise to respect the sensitiveness of German ambition. The Empire marked on the map of Africa at the Foreign Office, from Cairo to the Cape, could no longer become a reality. It was necessary to mutilate it by the partition of Africa. So England, the strong, yielded! To vent her rage, she had an easy victim – the allied nation at the expense of which she has ever aggrandized herself. She had nothing better to do than to dispute to the Portuguese the regions of gold in the interior of Africa. Where Portuguese expansibility might go, their powerful African Exploration Companies, created after the model of the too famous East India Company, were the vultures which should pounce on that Prometheus ravisher of fire, the light and guide of English missionaries in the interior of Africa.

The facts bring us near to the ultimatum – the clear and sufficient explanation of the treaty of the 20th August. Portugal renewed with England her ancient diplomatic negotiations on the limits of

⁷ *Camaroûn* in the original. (N. E.)

⁸ Also known under the name of Lüderitz Bay, it is located on the coast of Namibia. (N. E.)

⁹ *arrive* in the original. (N. E.)

Portuguese possessions in Africa. Portugal wanted to have its expansibility assured, its rights recognized, for the truth began to dawn on us. The Portuguese Government always found hard demands in London; the fact is, that Mozambique makes a profound gash in the Empire projected by the Foreign Office. England could not do without the best or the most valuable part of the “Hinterland” of that province. For us also there was an Empire, the plan of which gave pleasure to the little nation, relegated to the extreme southern corner of the West of Europe, which by perseverance and sacrifices had reached a comparative prosperity that gives us confidence. If the rapacity of other nations will not combine to prevent it, our colonial expansion will be a fact in twenty years in the best interests of humanity. This is our faith, and such a faith is already a force. Then Africa would be the third Empire which the Portuguese have created, India and Brazil being the first and second. To lose the third Empire would be our national death and the failure of our historical task in the annals of the world.

Whilst continuing negotiations with England, the Portuguese Government obtained the rather too platonic recognition of Germany and of France of its rights to expansion from the coast of Angola to that of Mozambique. This was the map of delimitation, the famous rose-coloured map of 1886.

England became aware of the Portuguese design, so legitimate in every way. It gave her umbrage; and, greed continuing to blind her, she preferred spoliation a second time. She protested against the limits of the map; she established her protectorate in the land of Matabeles;¹⁰ she pushed further and further into the interior by gifts, alcohol, arms, intrigue, and the perfidy of her missionaries, hostile to the Portuguese, who welcome and feed them, and, guiding them across Africa, do not remember the Punic faith of those whom they have under their humanitarian protection.

And Germany, that nightmare of the Foreign Office! Yes! Germany is a danger for England; but the triple alliance has no ships; their voice is lost in the infinite solitudes of the ocean. The English squadron had already supported Germany when Zanzibar was blockaded, where some poor devils had

¹⁰ *Matabales* in the original. (*N. E.*)

revolted against the Germans. In the meanwhile, Portuguese diplomacy confides too much in historical rights, and in those derived from priority of discovery or of occupation. England sometimes denied the occupation, but could not deny the priority of discovery, except as regards Nyasa.¹¹ But did *she* at least occupy these territories, which her covetousness would snatch by stealthy means? Did she occupy them for any time? No! But finding them good, she installed herself in them, and forbade us from imitating her on our own property!

Livingstone arrived at the Shire¹² and at the Nyasa, guided by the indications of a Portuguese at Tete, and protected by the Portuguese authorities. The mission of Blantyre¹³ established itself by the acquiescence and protection of the Portuguese Government and with the generous benevolence of Portuguese functionaries. Another English traveller found in Upper Mashona¹⁴ most important remains of the dominion and the influence of the Portuguese...

“So much the worse for Portugal! That would only tarnish English glory. They will suit us, Nyasaland¹⁵ and the Mashona and the lands of Gaza! Our great Companies will find enough gold in them for a crown of more solid glory,” and then the Foreign Office obstinately refused to recognize the historical rights of the Portuguese nation. “Let them show us their right and make us touch the reality of Monomotapa. Right may be theirs; force is ours, and force is the supreme right.”

Such was practically the language in England as regards the African question. The English Government, however, took good care not to despise the principle of right as regards other nations. It modified it according to its convenience. Thus, it claimed rights to the Shire and to the Nyasaland based on false premises – the discovery of these regions by Livingstone! Well, then, the Portuguese discovered the Shire and the Nyasa two centuries before Livingstone, and Livingstone himself arrived there by the hand of the Portuguese. Punic faith!

¹¹ *Nyassa* in the original. Nowadays Malawi. (N. E.)

¹² *Shiré* in the original. (N. E.)

¹³ *Blintyre* in the original. (N. E.)

¹⁴ *Machonie* in the original. (N. E.)

¹⁵ *Nyassaland* in the original. (N. E.)

On the other hand, England, only recognizing the rights of occupation, claimed for herself territories where precisely she had not the slightest occupation. Inconsistency of the wolf as regards the lamb!

The Portuguese Government understood the situation in Africa. It thought of strengthening by effective occupation those rights which the English Government persisted in not recognizing. A Portuguese expedition arrived in the upper Shire. Some indigenous kings of Nyasaland swore vassalage to the King of Portugal. Another expedition leaves Zumbo and goes as far as Sankate, and there accepts the oath of various important vassalages. The Portuguese district of Zumbo is created.

Then Consul Johnston and his lieutenant Buchanan instigate the Makololo¹⁶ against the expedition of Serpa Pinto,¹⁷ and the English African Exploration Companies begin to fear the loss of the regions of ivory and of gold. Serpa Pinto beats the Makololo in Mupassa; João Coutinho¹⁸ drives them back into the Chilomo.

England had now the pretext for the Ultimatum of the 11th of January. She had not wished, through contempt, to recognize our possession by historic right; she now prohibited us from exercising our right of possession by occupation.

I will not comment on the Ultimatum. The act of violence has not stunned us. It will ever remind us of our duties and of our perfidious friend.

Part II

Well informed of our military disorganization, Great Britain saw that, if the time had not yet arrived for forcing the Tagus, owing to the possible opposition of other nations, the moment was propitious

¹⁶ *Makololes* in the original. (*N. E.*)

¹⁷ Alexandre Rocha de Serpa Pinto (1846–1900) was a Portuguese traveller, explorer, and colonial administrator. By virtue of the Ultimatum, the military forces he was leading were told to remove from the territories linking Angola and Mozambique. His scientific expeditions in Africa, sponsored by the Portuguese government and the Lisbon Geographic Society, inspired twentieth-century Portuguese travel literature (see Isadora Fonseca's chapter in this volume). (*N. E.*)

¹⁸ *Jean Continko* in the original. (*N. E.*)

for seizing the maritime ports beyond the seas which belong to Portugal, in Western and Eastern Africa, such as St. Vincent, Lorenzo Marquez, etc.

There she had collected her available ships in more than sufficient number for a *coup de main* after the ultimatum of the 11th of January, 1890. However, we did not cede to the threat of the squadrons of powerful England. We ceded to the coalition of Europe for the partition of Africa.

The strength of nations does not solely consist in the force of armies and navies. It also consists in good sense and the necessary composure to guard the interests of the fatherland. To accept a challenge would be to lose Africa: it would be national suicide.

Diplomatic relations were once more renewed; but this time under circumstances deplorable to the last degree. The acquisitiveness of the English public loudly demanded from its Government the fulfilment of unbridled ambitions. The condition of the Lisbon Cabinet was desperate. On the one hand, it saw the rising flood of the legitimate aspirations and of the indignation of the Portuguese people, wounded to its soul by the injustice and atrocious insult of Great Britain. On the other hand, *the friendly nation*, forgetting too easily the most rudimentary principles of international *courtesy*, not satisfied to profit by our slips, went straight to its aim without any feeling of consideration.

The negotiations have been long and sad. The voice which alone had an echo at the Foreign Office was that of powerful British companies. Humanity, civilization, good faith, argument, were not there; but we found sneering lips, sharp teeth, and voracious jaws.

In Portugal, as elsewhere, party politics profit by public commotions; yet the patriotic movement in Portugal has been and is still as that of ONE MAN, in whom breathes the soul of all; young and old are ready to die for their country; the difficulty is to keep them in check. We are not afraid to fight in Africa. It is easy for us to go to the siege of Troy without Thetis for Mentor and Patroclus as friend; but – we know it well – Paris is hidden behind the statue of the god to launch the arrow which will pierce the heel of Achilles, vulnerable at seaports, in Africa and at Lisbon.

The treaty of the 20th August appeared. The partial recognition of the rights of Portugal is acquired in it at the cost of most valuable concessions. England cut out for herself an African empire in the pink map, and at the expense alike of our real empire and of our more or less theoretical sovereignty. The moment had come for Great Britain to recoup herself for what she had waived to Germany; she connected her dominions of the Lake region with Bechuanaland and the Cape, at the expense of the “hinterland” of Mozambique. By the treaty we are deprived of a great part of Nyasaland, a vast region to the north of the Zambezi up to Barotse,¹⁹ Upper Mashona, Ruo-Shire,²⁰ and a part of the Save valley. Nevertheless, this has not satisfied the moderate desires of some chauvinistic Englishmen, who wanted to reduce Mozambique to a strip along the sea.

The Portuguese had not in all these countries an effective dominion, but they had the whole stretch as a part of their historical domains, a certainly more valid claim than the more or less conjectural “spheres of influence,” which are a sufficient excuse to other nations for making new conquests; but, so far as the English and we are concerned, the former had neither an historical right nor even a theoretical dominion in the territories taken from us.

The English Government recognizes by the treaty our right to a portion of the country of the Amatomgas and a vast back country (hinterland) for the province of Angola, of which the Eastern frontiers are fixed by the upper course of the Zambezi, and by the valley way of the Kabompo.²¹

The conditions in which Portugal concluded these negotiations were crushing. The *ultimatum* was equivalent to a capitulation, and Europe regarded as a spectator this too easy victory. She will perhaps one day profit by this lesson in international law, the law of the *primi capientis*, of the *struggle for life*, of political *atavism*, in which civilization is engulfed and whence progress is checked by a return to primitive animalism.

¹⁹ *Barotze* in the original. (N. E.)

²⁰ *Russire* in the original. (N. E.)

²¹ *Cabompo* in the original. (N. E.)

It is all very well to say that European civilization demands a much greater wealth in gold and men than Portugal can command, in order to render profitable the efforts of a ruling nation in such vast and distant regions as those of Portuguese Africa. J. Disraeli said:

It is an important principle in morals and in politics, not to mistake the *cause* for the *pretext*, nor the *pretext* for the *cause*, and by this means to distinguish between the concealed and the ostensible motive. On this principle history might be recomposed in a new manner. [...] When we mistake the characters of men, we mistake the nature of their actions [...]. In all political affairs drop the *pretexts* and strike at the *causes*; we may thus understand what the heads of parties may choose to conceal.²²

The *pretext* has been *civilization*: the *cause* is the cupidity and selfish exclusiveness of England. Civilization!... The millions sterling do not suffice for African civilization. As for moral progress, I do not say that London will guarantee it. It is enough to say that Blantyre is responsible for it! In short, England has taken the lion's share. This she has found any easy task, *Victis honos*!

The treaty is also a stratagem to flatter a certain section of the British public, which had already proclaimed *Urbi et Orbi*, the absolute spoliation of Portuguese Africa.

The English would certainly obtain a great part of what the treaty demands from Portugal if they had not insisted on imposing servility on us. The Portuguese has no mind for low submission. His friends say that he is generous, and often simple minded. This is why the opposition to the treaty has been absolute throughout the country. I do not deny that party politics have benefited from²³ it, though in the midst of these passionate notes there were also noble vibrations; nor do I deny that some of us defended the treaty. For all that, however, the *motto* was the same, the renewal of international policy.

²² Isaac Disraeli. 1834 [1791]. *Curiosities of Literature*, vol. 1. Boston and New York: Lilly, Wait, Colman and Holden/Goodrich and Wiley, 404 and 408. (N. E.)

²³ *by* in the original. (N. E.)

Some accepted the treaty as it was, for they found in it wherewithal to prepare for redress. Alas! The country had been too profoundly insulted. Public opinion with all its might refused to accept the treaty; it became impossible even to discuss it; never before in Portugal has public opinion interested itself in so striking a manner in the affairs of the nation.

It is said that Portuguese anger is short lived. True, we have not enough vindictiveness to be cruel; but we remember injury to the honour of our country, and, like the French, we can be patient till the hour of redress. There are no longer noisy gatherings in the streets; the fever is gone, but the desire to find redress for our wrongs grows from day to day. Our sole thought is the growth of our country, for there will be no second “ultimatum” to fear, once we have a fifth of the material strength of England.

Unable to bear this situation, the Government has adopted the *modus vivendi* (!!). It is the synthesis of the treaty. The frontiers delineated in it have been provisionally recognized. England has obtained the principal concessions. The future is big with grave events. The affairs of the Congo are the corollary of the treaty, both of the *modus vivendi* and of the Anglo-Portuguese alliance. Where will it all end?